

# Columbus's encounter with caribbean natives essay

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Columbus's encounter with the native people of the Caribbean and the perceptions of the people were highly shaped by his background and religious beliefs. His background was centered on the milieu of western imperialism and economic competition among kingdoms seeking prosperity by establishing colonies and trade routes.

Determined to sail westward, Columbus sought financial support from King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella of Spain after King John II of Portugal declined his proposal. He was a catholic scholar with a view of the universe as everlasting and a world that was split into three sections: Europe, Africa and Asia.

He believed in the biblical prophecies concerning the conversion of all people to Christianity, the eventual recovery of the lost paradise and the return of Jesus Christ. Striving to fulfill the prophecy was a major stimulant for his travel and discovery. His belief was that his understanding of the world occurred via inspiration and the discoveries that followed were God's inspiration.

The history of the discovery by Caribbean people of Christopher Columbus in the service of the king and queen of Spain who assumed he was on the coast of China has explained the impact of the explorer on the land. He eventually made some sense of the land, at least to his satisfaction: the most significant attainment was to split the native population into two separate peoples. This division shaped perceptions of the people for many years.

In that respect, Columbus encounter with the native people was characterized by genocide and atrocious acts. One of the conditions that the king of Spain agreed to support these voyages was that Columbus would share gold and precious goods that he captured. Indeed, in his later voyages, Spain was insatiable and demanded more and more gold from him. Portugal was ahead of Spain in terms of trade routes and foreign tithes and King Ferdinand II considered Columbus exploration as an opportunity to level with other kingdoms.

When Columbus landed in the Caribbean, he thought that he had landed Cathay (China) because of the colored appearance of Native Indians. To the advantage of the Spaniards, the natives such as Arawaks and Hatuai lived in peace and could easily be controlled by threatening their peace.

He forced the natives to mine gold due to the pressure from King Ferdinand II to bring treasures back to Spain. Indeed, those who failed to satisfy the Spaniards were punished severely as examples to other natives. For example, when Columbus left Haiti, many of the Arawaks had been murdered or mutilated. Likewise, the Hatuai people who did not follow the demands of the Spaniards were crucified and burned alive.

As noted earlier, Columbus expedition was greatly driven by the need to convert all people to Christianity. A major focus in his exploration was to convert the people of Cathay to Christianity as a way of establishing a trade route to China. When he first saw wounds on the bodies of the natives, he interpreted that the Islands were the slave grounds used by the Great Khan.

The interpretation indicates the ever-imaginative willingness of Columbus to prove that China was close. He heard of the cannibals who inhabited the large island to the east and presumed that they were the people of Cathay. His success with the first natives revived the spirit of the explorer to succeed in converting the Great Khan. Expecting the people of Cathay to be intelligent, Columbus encounter with the later natives was therefore characterized by enslavement, torture, murder and extermination.